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“THE SUPERSTITIOUS MAN” OF THEOPHRASTUS

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(*Read at Meeting, 15th January, 1930.*)

THEOPHRASTUS, I may remind you, was the pupil of Aristotle, who succeeded to the leadership of the Peripatetic School in 323 B.C. His date is significant. He comes just at the beginning of a new order; Greece of the Greek city-states has definitely passed, the new world of the Hellenistic civilisation has come into being.

The authenticity of the character sketch of *The Superstitious Man*, though now generally accepted, was once questioned. The grounds of doubt were not in fact justified. It was argued that *deisidaimonia*, literally “fear of spiritual things,” is used by writers before Theophrastus¹ only in a good sense, in which indeed it continued sometimes to be used,² though less frequently than in a bad sense, by writers after him. The first use of the word in the sense of “superstition” was said to be that of Polybius.³ But even apart from the fact that Menander, the contemporary of Theophrastus, wrote a comedy called *Deisidaimon*, *The Super-*

¹ *E.g.* Xenophon, *Cyr.*, iii., 3, 58; *Ages.* ii., 8.

² Diodorus, i., 70; xi., 89.

³ Polybius, vi., 56.

stitious Man, anyone who turns over the fragments of the New Comedy will see, firstly, that "the superstitious man" is one of the stock social types which supplies butts to contemporary comedy; secondly, that the characteristic habits of this comic type correspond in a general way to the traits which Theophrastus condemns,—(fear of ominous dreams and happenings, anxieties about purification, a taste for the new and still generally despised oriental cults); and, thirdly, correspondences in detail which suggest that much of it belongs to the literary clichés of the time. There can be no real doubt that the *character* of *The Superstitious Man* accurately portrays a real social type who existed at the turn of the fourth and third centuries B.C.

Theophrastus defines superstition as "cowardice in regard to the supernatural," a rather characteristically Greek definition. For Greek culture had been essentially both rationalist and cheerful in temperament. In a later age which, however humane, had lost these qualities, Plutarch, in his celebrated treatise *On Superstition*, still maintained the Hellenic point of view. "Nothing too much" had been the view of Apollo, long before Aristotle had developed the philosophical doctrine of the virtuous mean. For Plutarch superstition is one extreme and atheism is the other, between which lies true piety,⁴ and on the side of emotion he contrasts true religion as a thing of joy with the degrading terrors of superstition.

It is, of course, a difficulty in studying the religious psychology of an ancient people that we are dependent for our knowledge upon literature, and are therefore necessarily more familiar with the heights of intellectual and imaginative achievement than with the lower slopes which limited the range of average minds, and we get but occasional glimpses of the still lower depths where doubtless dwelt the unlettered peasant. For this no doubt some allowance must be made. But even so the world of Homer, though in

⁴ Compare also Plutarch, *de genio Socratis*, 9.

many respects primitive, is remarkably rational. Some examples of magical practices may be culled from the poems, but they are astonishingly few. Religious interest is mainly concentrated upon this life; its sequel is a shadowy gloom, but one which little affects the present. The temper of man's relations with the gods is noble and genial. Homer perhaps represents an aristocratic view, and from the Bronze Age, of which archaeology has now taught us something, were inherited other beliefs about which Homer is silent, but which did survive and exerted as time went on an increasing influence, notably the cult of dead chieftains, and possibly a different conception of life after death.⁵

The dark period which lies between Homeric and historical Greece saw on the one hand the development of the Greek type of polity, the small and fiercely independent city-state, and on the other hand the emergence of influences making both for universalism and individualism in religious matters. The two forces represent divergent streams. On the one hand there was an increasing tendency to regard religion as an affair primarily of civic or social units, that is to say, to envisage the establishment and maintenance of right relations with the powers of heaven as having for its object the welfare of the city, tribe, or family rather than that of any particular individual. This tendency may be said to lead almost to the substitution of an ethically emotional patriotism for religion, the religion of the *Funeral Speech* of Pericles.

On the other hand, partly as the result of the emergence of ideas which Homer had ignored, and partly as the result of the intrusion of foreign religious ideas, more individual and more mystical tendencies manifested themselves. The great importance attained by the oracle of Delphi in the Greek world brought into prominence the ideas of possession and of purification. Possession, again, was a cardinal feature of the orgiastic religion of Dionysus, which victor-

⁵ See N. M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion etc.*, pp. 556 *et seq.*

iously conquered post-Homeric Greece. An offshoot, as it were, of the Dionysiac cult were the Orphic societies, the influence of which was already widely important in the sixth century. In these both other-worldliness and individualism triumphed. Their object was to secure for their individual members, by means of ritual purification, initiation, and a rule of life, a happy existence beyond the grave, and their communities consisted not of civic or social units but of a number of private persons united in a religious society.

Through Pythagoreanism which allied itself with Orphism this movement exercised a great influence upon the higher religious thought of Greece, an influence which may be detected upon all her religious thinkers from Pindar onwards. It also affected popular superstition, as the spread of mystical doctrine, with the opportunities which it inevitably offers to charlatans, must always do. It gave too a new respectability to many popular superstitions. Thus, in the appendix to the *Works and Days* of Hesiod we have a list of lucky and unlucky actions and days. These were taken up and given new mystical meanings by the Pythagoreans, who adopted their observance. We may also notice that this development of other-worldliness and mysticism led to an increased popular interest in ghosts, of which there are symptoms in the adoption, general by the fifth century, of euphemistic terms for the dead,—the good *χρηστοί* or the blessed *μακαρίτης*, (the first non-Attic, the second Attic),—or the use of "heroes" as generic for departed spirits.⁶

But, apart from the Pythagoreans, natural philosophy and science had mainly led through the Ionians towards rationalism. This movement the progress of science and the enlarged knowledge of the world in the fifth century had abetted. But upon the one hand the breakdown of the specific scientific hypotheses of the natural philosophers had led to a pragmatism of the problem of knowledge,

⁶ See note in W. R. Halliday, *The Greek Questions of Plutarch*, p. 50.

while upon the other hand the enlarged knowledge of the world had the consequences that the ubiquitous Greek sailor was subject to foreign religious influences, and oriental worshippers began to bring their alien gods with them to the busy marts of Greece. Foreign, particularly oriental, cults began to popularise themselves upon Greek soil.

The New Comedy, the characteristic literature of the period to which Theophrastus belongs, is definitely the literature of an upper social class, which the Old Comedy was not. The audience to which it is addressed is intelligent, educated, not very profound, and, as the fragments of Menander show, highly appreciative of copy-book moralities expressed with a forcible dexterity in the use of words. The old city-state religion had lost its vitality with the virtual supersession of the city-state which Alexander's career had brought about ; it had become largely a matter of conformity, and its place was in practice to be taken by religious philosophy. But, when Theophrastus wrote, that application of philosophy to religious need which was to dominate the Graeco-Roman world had not been effected, and the immediate tendencies of the older schools were making towards scepticism. But, on the other side, the growth of individualism and the influx of oriental cults reinforcing the native mystical religious element had led to an increase of emotional religiosity. Mysticism may be capable of great heights : it is certainly capable of abysmal depths. The intelligent patrons of the Comedy of Manners are intelligibly moved to smile at the superstitious type whose religious practices violate the canons of good form in exaggerated attention to ritual, preserve antiquated rubbish from the religions of the past, and eagerly cultivate all the extravagances of the new foreign cults which are still contemptuously felt to be uncongenial to the enlightened Greek.⁷

⁷ See Plutarch, *de sup.*, 3, 166.

The superstitious man is much concerned to achieve a state of magical purification from ill. As soon as he rises in the morning he washes his hands at a fountain, sprinkles himself from a temple font, and puts a bit of laurel leaf into his mouth. He is scrupulous also in sprinkling himself with sea-water. Having started his day with these precautions, he is very careful not to incur pollution by treading on a tombstone or by the remotest contact with childbirth or with death.

The idea of purification by water is of obvious origin and of universal application in religious and magical ritual in all parts of the world. The special efficacy of running water, for that is why upon rising our friend repairs to the fountain, is very generally recognised. The evil spirits in the forests of Burma find running water as difficult to cross as do the witches of Scotland,⁸ while in Germany you may rid yourself of hiccoughs by crossing running water and repeating a narrative spell.⁹ In classical antiquity the virtues of running water in purification are well attested. Thus Atossa, before offering sacrifice for the aversion of her evil dream, laves her hands in water from a spring.¹⁰ Empedocles recommends the use of water drawn from five different springs,¹¹ a typical example of magical elaboration,¹² and similar prescriptions are frequent in the formulae

⁸ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i., p. 442.

⁹ "Schluckauf und ich
Gingen übern Steg :
Schluckauf fiel 'rein
Und ich lief weg."

E. Fehrle, *Deutsche Feste und Volksbräuche*, 3rd ed., p. 83.

¹⁰ Aeschylus, *Persae*, 202. Compare Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1338:—

ἀλλὰ μοι ἀμφίπολοι λύχνον ἄψατε
κάλλιπσί τ' ἐκ ποταμῶν δρόσον ἄρατε, θέρμετε δ' ὕδωρ
ὥς ἂν θεῶν δνειρον ἀποκλύσω.

¹¹ Empedocles, *Frag.*, 143, (Diels). Compare Menander quoted on p. 128, note 22 below, where water from three springs is prescribed.

¹² See W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, pp. 23 *et seq.*, 171 *et seq.*

of late classical magic.¹³ At the Roman *Parilia* in April, when the herds were purified, the shepherd, facing the east, four times repeated his prayer for the aversion of ill and the fertility of the flock and then washed his hands in “living dew.”¹⁴ In Silius Italicus Anna is made to wash in the “living stream.”¹⁵

Sea-water has also a peculiar efficacy in ritual cleansing. *θάλασσα κλύζει πάντα τᾶνθρώπων κακά*.¹⁶ Hence the practice common throughout the Greek world of the periodic solemn washing of the images of deities in the sea.¹⁷ It was to the sea that the hero Eunostos was seen to repair for purification when his taboo sanctuary had been defiled by feminine intrusion,¹⁸ and it was on their way to purification in the sea that the Tanagraean votaries of Dionysos encountered the Triton.¹⁹ In the detailed regulations of religious ritual of which we have epigraphic record, the use of sea-water is not seldom specifically prescribed for purposes of purification.²⁰ Where sea-water was not available, salt and water might sometimes be used as an artificial substitute. In Theocritus’ description of the cleansing of

¹³ Further examples will be found in E. Rohde, *Psyche*, vol. ii., p. 405.

¹⁴

“Conuersus ad ortus

Dic quater et uiuo perlue rore manus.”

Ovid, *Fasti*, iv., 777. In my *Lectures on the History of Roman Religion*, p. 49, I temporised with the suggestion of Warde Fowler, (*Roman Festivals*, p. 82), that “uiuo rore” might be equivalent to May-dew. For this I was rightly taken to task by Wissowa in his notice of the book in the *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*. There can be little doubt that running water is meant.

¹⁵ Silius Italicus, viii., 125.

¹⁶ Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1193.

¹⁷ See P. O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie etc.*, p. 889; E. Samter, *Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod*, p. 158; Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer*, p. 96; E. Fehrle, *Die kultische Keuschheit im Altertum*, pp. 171 et seq.

¹⁸ Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.*, 40, 301 A.

¹⁹ Pausanias, ix., 20, 4.

²⁰ E.g. C. F. W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge*, 3rd ed., 1026, 24, and 1218, 16.

Alcmena's house a mixture of salt and water was employed,²¹ and water in which salt and lentils have been thrown is the agent of purification in a magical rite described by Menander.²²

The other vehicle of lustration which our friend employs, is holy water from a temple font. *Περριραντήρια*, as they were technically called, stood at the doors of Greek temples ; at Delphi could be seen those which had been presented by the munificent and politic Cræsus.²³ Apart from any special circumstances which might make purification particularly necessary, *e.g.* the messenger who brought the news of the battle of Salamis,²⁴ it was obligatory upon all worshippers before entering the sacred place to purify themselves by sprinkling from the defiling contacts of the world without the shrine.²⁵ The inadequacy of mere ritual means of purification, unless accompanied by purity of heart, was being increasingly emphasised by Greek religious thought in the third century B.C., and Diogenes is said to have told another believer in the efficacy of holy water that he might as soon expect to rid himself of faults of grammar as of faults of conduct by mere sprinkling from a temple font.²⁶ But most of the contemporaries of Theophrastus would have duly sprinkled themselves, whenever they had occasion to enter a temple, without incurring the charge of superstitious practice. The author of the tract

²¹ Theocritus, xxix., 98.

²² Menander, *ap.* Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, vii., 4, 27, (*Frag.* 530, Kock).

περιμαξάτωσάν σ' αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν κύκλῳ
καὶ περιθεωσάτωσαν ἄπο κρουνῶν τριῶν
ὑδαὶ περίρραν' ἐμβαλὼν ἄλας φακοῦς.

²³ Herodotus, i., 51.

²⁴ Plutarch, *Aristeides*, 20.

²⁵ αὐτοὶ τε ὕδρου τοῖσι θεοῖσι τῶν ἱερῶν καὶ τῶν τεμενέων ἀποδείκνυμεν ὥς ἂν μηδεὶς ὑπερβαίῃ ἢ μὴ ἀγνεύῃ εἰσὶόντες τε ἡμεῖς περιρραϊνόμεθα οὐχ ὥς μαινόμενοι, ἀλλ' εἴ τι καὶ πρότερον ἔχομεν μῦσος τοῦτο ἀφαγνιούμενοι, Hippocrates, *de sacr. morb.*, iv., 55. See further Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult*, p. 7.

²⁶ Diog. Laert., vi., 42.

Upon the Sacred Disease can hardly be regarded as being unduly superstitious! Here the failing of the Superstitious Man would seem to lie in his use of a purificatory ritual, proper to a particular purpose or occasion, as a magical charm of general efficacy, much as fragments of the consecrated wafer have been used in Christian countries as a powerful instrument for general magical purposes.

The other purificatory precaution adopted by the Superstitious Man is putting a bit of laurel leaf in his mouth. For the chewing of a prophylactic plant we may compare the practice during the dangerous days of *Anthesteria*, when the Athenian souls were thought to revisit their homes. The living then took the precaution to paint their doorposts with pitch, and when they rose in the morning chewed the leaves of the magical buck-thorn.²⁷ But here the laurel leaf is probably placed in the mouth for no more recondite reason than because Greek garments had no effective pocket for small objects, a fact which explains the habitual carrying of small change in the mouth which in turn is the possible reason why the Athenians did not take kindly to a copper coinage.²⁸ The motive of the Superstitious Man is precisely the same as that which inspires those who fear the malevolence of witches to make their whipstocks of rowan or to carry leaves or pieces of this tree in their pockets.²⁹

The laurel was peculiarly the sacred tree of Apollo, and it is probably to this fact that it owes its properties. There is no magical significance in its being eaten at dessert,³⁰ nor in the various medicinal uses of it which are enumerated

²⁷ Photius, svv. *μαρὰ ἡμέρα* and *ράμνος*.

²⁸ Aristophanes, *Birds*, 501. Copper coins, Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 720-6, and see further P. Gardiner, *History of Ancient Coinage*, pp. 226, 295. Further references in W. R. Halliday, *Growth of the City State*, p. 251, note 135.

²⁹ E. M. Wright, *Rustic Speech and Folk-Lore*, p. 234.

³⁰ Athenaeus, iv., 17, 140 d-e.

by Pliny.³¹ Theocritus and Virgil allege its use in love magic, to which also a somewhat obscure reference in Propertius would seem to lend support,³² but of this there is no example in such records as we possess of ancient magical formulae.³³ The laurel appears frequently and prominently in the public ritual connected with Apollo, the god of purification, who returned from Tempe cleansed from the slaughter of Python wearing a laurel crown.³⁴ Its leaves were chewed by the Pythia as an aid to inspiration,³⁵ and Empedocles, who regards the lion and the laurel as the highest of animal and vegetable forms, in the scale of metempsychosis,³⁶ recommends abstention from eating laurel on the ground of its being sacred to Apollo.³⁷

It was from this association with the god of purification that the plant probably acquired in magical usage its property of keeping spirits away. Charicleia was cured by being rubbed down with laurel to the accompaniment of spells; ³⁸ neither epilepsy nor evil spirit would enter the

³¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xx. 17, (73), 193; xxiii., 8, (88), 152.

³² Theocritus, ii., 23; Virgil, *Ecl.*, viii., 82; Propertius ii., 28b, 36,

"deficiunt magico torti sub carmine rhombi
et tacet extincto laurus adusta foco."

³³ See A. Abt, *Die Apologie des Apuleius von Madaura und die antike Zauberei*, pp. 77 foll. Some further examples are there given of the magical uses of laurel and laurel wood.

³⁴ See W. R. Halliday, *The Greek Questions of Plutarch*, pp. 68 *et seq.* Whatever the origin of the series of rites connected with *Septerion*, their general kathartic character is certain (see L. R. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, vol. iv., pp. 293-5).

³⁵ Lucian, *Bis Acc.*, 2. Compare *Orph. Hym. Mag.*, ii., 2 (Abel, p. 288).

Δάφνη, μαρτοσύνης ἱερὸν φυτὸν Ἀπόλλωνος
ἧς πότε γευσάμενος πετάλων ἀνέφηγεν αἰόδας
αὐτὸς ἀναξ σκηπτούχος ἠγέε κύδιμε Παῖαν.

See also Tibullus, ii., 5, 63; hence its figurative use for poetical inspiration, *e.g.*, Juvenal, vii., 191. ³⁶ Empedocles, *Frag.* 127, (Diels).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, *Frag.* 140, (Diels).

³⁸ Heliodorus, *Aeth.*, iv., 5. καὶ τινα δῆθεν ψιθύροις τοῖς χεῖλεσι κατευξάμενος τὴν δάφνην ἐκ κεφαλῆς εἰς πύδας ἄνω καὶ κάτω πυκνὰ τῆς Χαρικλείας ἐπεσώβουν.

house where it was kept,³⁹ and to the Queen of the Night and ghosts it was ἐχθρὸν θυμίασμα.⁴⁰ Foul water was made good to drink by dipping laurel in it,⁴¹ dried leaves or ashes from burnt laurel wood would keep barley sound,⁴² and blight could be removed from the crops by placing laurel leaves upon the land when ploughed.⁴³

Our hero, like the Roman *Flamen Dialis*, who might not touch a corpse “or anything suggesting blood or slaughter, such as raw meat,”⁴⁴ is careful to avoid the dangerous contagion of death. He will not tread upon a tombstone, of which, besides the upright stelai, the Greeks also used a flat form which was known as τράπεζα, table. We may be sure too that he was careful to walk in silence past the tombs at night, lest some “hero” be enraged by his voice and spring upon him and give him a “stroke.”⁴⁵ Less justifiably he refuses to pay the last rites of friendship to the dead. It was the custom for friends to visit the corpse while it was lying in state. Sprinkling from a bowl of lustral water (*ardanion*) at the door sufficed to purify them when they came out of the house of death. But our hero is taking no risks.

He will equally avoid the house of birth, for childbirth in Greece, as in most parts of the world, created an acute and dangerous condition of impurity which is contagious.⁴⁶

“If ever mortal hand be dark with blood;
Nay, touch a new-made mother or one slain
In war, her (Artemis) ban is on him. ’Tis a stain
She driveth from her outer walls; and then
Herself doth drink the blood of slaughtered men.”⁴⁷

³⁹ Geoponica, xi., 2. ⁴⁰ Pap. Par., 2582, 2648, *ap. Abt, op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁴¹ Geoponica, ii., 7, 3. ⁴² *Ibid.*, ii., 30, 1. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, v., 33, 4.

⁴⁴ H. J. Rose, *The Roman Questions of Plutarch*, p. 110.

⁴⁵ Schol. Aristophanes, *Birds*, 1490; Suidas, s.v. Ὀρέστης; Photius, v. κελτρες.

⁴⁶ See W. R. Halliday, *Greek and Roman Folklore*, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, 381, trans. G. G. A. Murray. Compare the quotation in Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, vii., 4.

Hence birth, no less than death, was taboo in the holy isle of Delos, and among the miraculous cures upon the tablets at Epidauros the gynaecological cases are exceptions to the tale of instantaneous cure in the dream, for patients may not be delivered until they have left the sacred precinct.

Inevitably our superstitious friend is much affected by lucky or unlucky animals or birds crossing his path, ἐνοδίοι συμβόλοι, as they were called, which Prometheus first taught men to interpret.⁴⁸ "If a weasel run across his path, he will not pursue his walk until someone else has traversed the road, or until he has thrown three stones across it." "If a weasel were to run across the road," says a character in Aristophanes, "they would stop levying war."⁴⁹ It will be unnecessary to multiply examples from modern folklore of persons turning back if some unlucky animal, in this country usually a cat or a hare, should cross their path. But, though perhaps the cat is the true modern analogy to the Greek *gale*,⁵⁰ I may quote one Yorkshire parallel to this fear of the weasel. "A weasel crossing your path is most unlucky: it speaks of treachery. This evil omen may be counteracted by the performance of a very

⁴⁸ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vincit*, 487.

⁴⁹ Aristophanes, *Eccl.*, 792. Compare the parody of Euripides, *Orestes*, 279, quoted by the Scholiast *ad loc.*

A. γαλήν' ὄρω. B. ποῖ πρὸς θεῶν; ποῖ ποῖ γαλήν;

A. γαλήν. B. ἐγὼ δ' ᾤμην γαλήν λέγειν σ' ὀράν.

Compare the serpent in Horace, *Od.*, iii., 27, 5:—

"rumpat et serpens iter institutum
si per obliquum similis sagittae
terrui mannos."

⁵⁰ The well-known inlaid dagger blades from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae suggest that the Egyptian cat was known in Greece in the Bronze Age. The interesting "hockey player" relief of the end of the sixth century B.C., which was found a few years ago at Athens, appears to depict a true cat, but in the fifth century Herodotus describes the Egyptian cat as though it were a foreign animal quite unknown to his audience. It is at least certain that the normal household animal for keeping down rodents in Ancient Greece was the *gale*, a kind of polecat.

mean trick: drop a coin on the road where you saw the weasel cross, and the evil which was yours by right will cling to those who are unlucky enough to find it.”⁵¹ Our friend's first expedient has precisely the same mean purpose, viz., to let the other fellow who goes first get the bad luck.⁵²

Alternatively our friend throws three stones, not at the weasel, as Jebb supposes,⁵³ but across the path. Exactly why he did so, he probably could no more have explained himself than the majority of those who throw spilled salt over their left shoulder with the right hand could explain their observance of traditional custom. I am inclined to think that the action erected a sort of barrier between himself and the omen, that it was a *rite de séparation*. I see no reason to suppose that there was here any particular magical virtue in the stones as stones. The efficacy, I fancy, lies in the action which created a triple symbolical cleavage. Something of the same sort is the modern Egyptian practice of breaking a pot behind the back of one you fear, in order to prevent any further contact with him.⁵⁴

⁵¹ R. Blakeborough, *Wit, Character, Folklore, and Customs of the N. Riding of Yorkshire*, 2nd ed., p. 145.

⁵² This type of avoidance, of course, is common. A good example will be found in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxxix., p. 175. In Cardigan a wart cure is effected by choosing from the fireplace one piece of ash for each wart. Sew the ashes in a bag and wear it for a day, after which throw it away. If any person finds the bag he will get the warts in your place. Cognate to this method of riddance is the practice common in Ancient Greece and elsewhere of countering an unlucky omen or prophecy by directing its fulfilment against the speaker, e.g. Aristophanes, *Peace*, 1063, or Theocritus, vi., 22. On this see further W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, p. 49.

⁵³ Hence the excellent story, quoted by Jebb from Dio Chrysostom, of the unlucky Phrygian who threw a stone and hit the ill-omened raven but was subsequently thrown from his beast and broke his leg, (Dio Chrys., *Or.*, xxxiv.), is not really relevant.

⁵⁴ E. W. Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, p. 256. At funerals among Arabs in the neighbourhood of Alcazar in Morocco they throw stones into the air, saying to God, “What did you take? You only took a corpse.” With some diffidence I am inclined to interpret this too as in origin a rite of separation. E. Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, vol. ii., pp. 441-2.

"If an owl is startled by him in his walk, he will exclaim "Glory be to Athena" before he proceeds." Although Greeks shared the world-wide fear of the hooting of the owl as the presage of death,⁵⁵ and one might compare the propitiatory doffing the hat to the magpie, an evil omen in this country, I agree with Jebb that the appearance of the small owl which nests in the crevices of the Acropolis and was consequently the bird of Athena⁵⁶ was not an event to cause fear to an Athenian.⁵⁷ The curious exclamation Ἀθηνᾶ κρείττω Jebb not inaptly compares with the Irish exclamatory use of the comparative "more power to you." This salutation of the owl belongs to the same category as the obligatory προσκύνησις of the first kite seen in the year, which caused one of the characters in Aristophanes to swallow the small change he was carrying in his mouth.⁵⁸ Martin Luther recommended that, when you see a small bird, you should take off your hat and say "Good Luck."⁵⁹

Domestic portents, an adaptation to the small scale of the home of the more impressive miracles which affected state welfare, also dismayed our hero and his like—οἰκοσκοπητικόν as the technical science of their interpretation was called: its trivial nature naturally made it easy to ridicule, and the allusions in the New Comedy are frequent.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, p. 166.

⁵⁶ See N. M. P. Nilsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 423 *et seq.*

⁵⁷ See Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1085. In Aelian, *H. An.*, x., 37, it is true that, if an owl appears and suddenly stops, it is a friendly warning of impending disaster: the Athenian had best turn back.

⁵⁸ Aristophanes, *Birds*, 501.

⁵⁹ Hopf, *Thierorakel und Orakelthiere*, p. 31.

⁶⁰ "quot res post illa monstra euenerunt mihi?
introicit in aedis ater alienus canis:
anguis per impluuium decidit de tegulis:
gallina cecinit: interdixit hariolus:
haruspex uetuit ante brumam autem noui
negoti incipere: quae causa 'st iustissima."

Terence, *Phormio*, iv., 4, 224-29; compare the examples quoted in Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, vii., 4. For οἰκοσκοπητικόν see further W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, p. 167.

But the drawing of inferences from this kind of happening is not confined to ancient Greece, and, indeed, is fairly common all over the world. For example, “ the entrance into a house of an animal which does not generally seek to share the abode of man is regarded by the Malays as ominous of misfortune. . . . An iguana, a tortoise and a snake are perhaps the most dreaded of these unnatural visitors.” ⁶¹

If a *pareias* snake is seen in the house, the Superstitious Man invokes Sabazios, if a “ sacred snake ” he will straightway place a shrine on the spot. Of these the *pareias* was a harmless snake of a reddish colour with large bright eyes and a broad mouth.⁶² It was sacred to Asklepios, and was frequently the agent in the miraculous cures which were wrought at his sanctuaries. Such snakes in ancient Greece and Rome, as in many modern European countries, were regarded as representing the tutelary genius of the house, and the Athenian State itself had an analogous genius to the domestic reptile in the *οἰκουρὸς ὄφις* which was regularly given monthly offerings and which evacuated the Acropolis at the approach of the Persians.⁶³

The *pareias* is of good rather than of bad presage, but our friend clinches the luck by invoking Sabazios. Now snakes of this harmless kind were carried by Maenads in their revels, and they were plentiful in temples of Dionysos. Sabazios, though called in Phrygian inscriptions Zeus Sabazios, was currently identified in mainland Greece with Dionysos. His cult came from Asia Minor into Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries, and it belonged to the emotional type of which mysteries and purifications formed an essential feature. It belonged, that is to say, with the

⁶¹ W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 534. ⁶² Aelian, *H. An.*, viii., 12.

⁶³ Herodotus, viii., 41. Upon the whole subject of the house-snake in Greece see Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, pp. 278 *et seq.*, and p. 427. Nilsson holds that the Minoan snake goddess is to be interpreted as a domestic goddess rather than a deity of the underworld.

cults of Attis and Adonis, to the first wave of mystical oriental cults which aroused opposition and contempt in the upper classes at Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries but which, nevertheless, spread rapidly and established a firm hold, particularly upon the women. In his invective against Aeschines Demosthenes describes him as "leading those fierce troops of bacchantes through the streets,—squeezing red snakes and holding them on high above his head and crying "*euoe, saboe.*" "

The so-called "sacred snake" or *σηπῆδων*, on the other hand, was to be feared. It was small but very deadly.⁶⁴ The portent of its appearance causes the Superstitious Man at once to erect a shrine upon the spot and one imagines that his house must have been cluttered up with votive images and small shrines. The existence of such practices carried to a ludicrous excess had already attracted the notice of Plato, and it is explicitly one of the reasons given for his rule in the *Laws* that "no man shall have sacred rites in a private house."⁶⁵

"If a mouse gnaws through a mealbag, our friend will go to the expounder of the sacred law (*exegetes*) and ask what is to be done; and, if the answer is "give it to the cobbler to stitch up," he will disregard this counsel and go his way and expiate by sacrifice." The mouse and the mealbag is a stock cliché of our type of literature, and even the retort fathered by Augustine⁶⁶ upon Cato, that had the boots eaten the rats there would be some cause for alarm, was told in Greece of the mealbag and the mice.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Aristotle, *H.A.*, 607a, 29; Aelian, xv., 18; Nicander, *Theriaka*, 320; (Aristotle), *de mir. ausc.*, 151, 845b. The last is a pleasant story from Thessaly of the destruction of a *sepedon* by a wise woman by means of a magic circle.

⁶⁵ Plato, *Laws*, x., 909 E.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *de Doctr. Chr.*, ii.

⁶⁷ *Com. Frag. Adesp.*, 341 (Kock). Variant forms of this retort,—the swine and the litter, or the pestle and the snake,—will be found in Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, vii., 4. As regards the portent of gnawing by mice, mice gnawed the bowstrings of the Assyrians in Herodotus'

The sensibly unsympathetic *exegetes* to whom the Superstitious Man turned was an official repository of religious lore. It is upon the *exegetai* that falls the duty of arranging all the details of the religious life of Plato's ideal state and its members in such a way as to give effect to Delphic ordinance.⁶⁸ In Athens there were three boards, the *ἐξηγηταί Πυθόχρηστοι*, who were specially concerned with purification of those under a curse, the *ἐξηγηταί ἐξ Εὐπατρίδων*, the repositories of the ancestral religious lore of Athens, and the *ἐξηγηταί ἐξ Εὐμολπίδων*, the guardians of the ancient traditional lore of Eleusis.⁶⁹ Each board seems to have consisted of three members appointed after careful scrutiny for life. Their prominence in public life is attested by their official seats in the theatre. Primarily, of course, these expounders of sacred law were public officials, but, particularly in religious matters, the action of the citizen affects the state, and appeal could be made to the *exegetai* by private citizens with regard to matters on the borderline of religious and secular law.⁷⁰

The Superstitious Man, however, will not allow the commonsense even of these religious experts to belittle his fears. He expiates the omen with sacrifice, a procedure which he also follows after an alarming dream.⁷¹ In Greek

(ii., 141) version of Sennacherib's disaster. Mice gnawed Carbo's boot thongs before his defeat by Sulla in 82 B.C., (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, viii., 57), and the shields at Lanuvium before the Marsian War (Cicero, *de div.*, ii., 27, 59, and see further the note *ad loc.* in the Commentary by A. S. Pease).

⁶⁸ Plato, *Laws*, vi., 759.

⁶⁹ Suidas, s.v. *ἐξηγηταί*.

⁷⁰ E.g. Demosthenes, in *Euerg.*, 1160.

⁷¹ The belief that dreams have a significance relating to the dreamers is shared by all peoples in all parts of the world, and in Greece sober persons of repute paid attention to their warnings. Thus Pausanias, (i., 14, 3), abandoned his intention of describing in detail the objects in the Eleusinion at Athens in consequence of a warning dream. In ancient as in modern Greece incubation at a sacred place or shrine for the purpose of receiving a divine message in a dream was widely practised, particularly by sick persons resorting to the beneficent aid

tragedy we find that an evil dream may perchance be averted by telling it to the sun or to the open sky.⁷² The ancient Babylonians similarly are said to have averted evil dreams by telling them to the sun.⁷³ Circe in Apollonius Rhodius bathes in sea-water to wash away the evil of her dream,⁷⁴ and Atossa in Aeschylus washed her hands in the running water of a spring and followed the action by sacrifice.⁷⁵ After an ambiguous dream Clytaemnestra makes sacrifice to Apollo, and prays him if the import is good to confirm it, but if ill to avert it.⁷⁶

In general, it may be said that the normal methods of averting bad dreams are either the performance of some purificatory ritual, sacrifice, or religious act of merit, or

of divinities or heroes of healing, (see references in W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, pp. 128 *et seq.*). In late classical antiquity there were in circulation a series of spells called *δνειραιτητά*, attributed as a rule to the invention of some apocryphal seer which enabled their possessor to conjure the gods or spiritual agencies to send them dreams. E.g., *δνειραιτητὸν Πυθαγόρου καὶ Δημοκρίτου*. "ὅσοι ἐστὲ ἄγγελοι ὑπὸ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ (sc. Ἡλίου) τεταγμένοι, δι' ὃ παρακαλῶ, ἵνα τάχει ἔλθῃτε ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ καὶ δηλώσητέ μοι περὶ ὧν θέλω σαφῶς καὶ βεβαίως."

Other agencies involved in similar formulae are Luna, Apollo, Hermes, and spirits of the dead. See A. Abt, *Die Apologie des Apuleius von Madaura und die antike Zauberei*, pp. 243, 244.

⁷² Sophocles, *Electra*, 424, and schol. Euripides, *Iph. T.*, 42. Cf. Euripides, *Medea*, 57, where the nurse tells Medea's wrongs to Earth and Sky. In Propertius (ii, 29, 27) the dream is told to the hearth:—

"ibat et intactae narratum somnia Vestae
neu sibi neue mihi quae nocitura foret."

⁷³ Lenormant, *La divination et la science des présages chez les Chaldéens*, p. 129.

⁷⁴ Apollonius Rhodius, *Arg.*, iv., 670.

⁷⁵ Aeschylus, *Persae*, 178 *et seq.* See above, p. 126. The practice of Egyptian priests noted by Chaeremion *ap.* Porphyry, *de abst.*, iv., 7, (εἰ δὲ ποτε συμβαίῃ καὶ δνειρώττειν παραχρῆμα ἀπεκάθειρον λουτρῶ τὸ σῶμα), is perhaps rather to be connected with ablutions after sexual intercourse.

⁷⁶ Sophocles, *Electra*, 643. The Hippocratic tract *de insomniis* (ii., p. 10, Kuhn) recommends after good dreams sacrifice to the Sun, to Zeus Ouranios, Zeus Ktesios, Athena Ktesia, Hermes, or Apollo

else the transference of the evil either to someone else or to some place of confinement.⁷⁷

Thus, in the seventeenth century the Turkish traveller Evliya tells us,—“I slept on board troubled by heavy dreams, on the next day I went on shore, to do away the evil of the night by some alms.” Actually he was unsuccessful, for he was shortly afterwards shipwrecked.⁷⁸ Among the North African Arabs after a true dream one must thank God and tell it, but only to a person of approved virtue, never to a woman or an enemy. After a bad dream, spit on the right and say,—“I take refuge with God”; never tell it to anyone.⁷⁹ Other tribes in Morocco, however, hold that you should not tell a good dream but you should tell a bad one, because the act of narration transfers the omen to the listener.⁸⁰ A bad dream may be got rid of by telling it to the fowls, to a stone in the desert, by whispering it into the mouth of a water-jar, or by raising a stone,

after bad dreams to apotropaeic Earth and the heroes. For a Latin example of sacrifice see Plautus, *Amphitryo*, 738-740:—

“somnia narrat tibi

sed mulier, postquam experrecta esto prodigiali Ioui
aut mola salsa hodie aut ture comprecatam oportuit.”

Tibullus, (i., 5, 13), uses “mola salsa” to prevent his sick lady from having dreams:—

“ipse procuraui ne possent saeua nocere
somnia ter sancta deulneranda mola.”

⁷⁷ For general superstitious practice, see Plutarch, *de sup.*, 3, 166:

καὶ δαπανῶσιν εἰς ἀγύρτας καὶ γοήτας ἀνθρώπους ἐμπέσσοντες λέγοντας
ἀλλ' εἰ σ' ἐνυπνιον φάντασμα φοβεῖ
χθονιάς θ' Ἐκάτης κῶμον ἐδέξω,

τὴν περιμάκτριαν κάλει γραῦν καὶ βάπτισον σεαυτὸν εἰς θάλασσαν καὶ καθίσας ἐν τῇ
γῇ διημέρευσον.

ὦ βάρβαρ' ἐξευρόντες Ἕλληνες κακὰ
τῇ δεισιδαιμονίᾳ πηλώσεις καταβορβορώσεις σαββατισμοῦς, ῥίψεις
ἐπὶ πρόσωπον, αἰσχρὰς προκαθίσεις, ἀλλοκότους προσκυνήσεις.

⁷⁸ Von Hammer, *Travels etc. of Evliyâ Efendi*, vol. ii., p. 67.

⁷⁹ E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 408.

⁸⁰ E. Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, vol. ii., p. 48.

recounting the dream to the earth, and then putting the stone back to hold it down.⁸¹

The Superstitious Man is pardonably anxious that his expiatory sacrifice should be directed to the right quarter, and his question to the experts takes the traditional form of that of States when menaced by portents, droughts, or pestilence, with the wrath of heaven, or of individuals in sickness and trouble seeking the aid of some oracle. We may compare the formula of the Dodona inscriptions.⁸²

The experts to whom our friend applies are the interpreters of dreams, the *manteis* and the augurs; on these he wastes his money (like the objects of Plutarch's scorn). On the interpreters of dreams, however, he will not have wasted much. Alciphron, a good authority,—for, though the author was a rhetorician probably of the second century after Christ, his *Letters* are essentially a cento from New and Middle Comedy,—speaks of the interpreters of dreams who sit with boards by the temple of Iacchos and charge two drachmae for their services.⁸³ But the normal scale was less, viz. two obols both before and after the time of Theophrastus.⁸⁴

According to Demetrius of Phalerum, a grandson of Aristides was reduced to plying this dream interpretation by the divining board near the Iaccheion.⁸⁵ How exactly the board was used,—I am sure Lobeck⁸⁶ is wrong in think-

⁸¹ E. Westermarck, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 605; vol. ii., pp. 48, 485. The difference in the theory about telling your dream is due to the contradictory hypotheses, (1), that telling confirms what is told, and, (2), that telling transfers what is told to the person or thing to whom it is told.

⁸² E.g. C. F. W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge*, 3rd ed., 1161. ἱστορεῖ Νικοκράτεια τίνι θεῶν θύουσα λῶϊον καὶ ἄμεινον πράσσοι καὶ τὰς νόσον παύσαιο.

⁸³ Alciphron, *Epist.*, iii., 59.

⁸⁴ Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 52. For a later period see Lucian, *deor. conc.*, 12, 534; *Alex.*, 19, 82. Cf. οἱ ἐν τοῖς κύκλοις ἀγείροντες δυοῖν ὀβολοῖν τῷ προστυχόντι ἀποθεσπίζουσι, Max. Tyr., 19, 362. To this two-penny art Juvenal refers in *Sat.*, vi., 546.

⁸⁵ Plutarch, *Aristeides*, 27; *Parall. Ar. et Cat.*, 3.

⁸⁶ C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, 1, 253.

ing of it as equivalent to the table of astragalos throws,—there is no information. Probably the *σανίδιον* of the priest of Cybele in Menander⁸⁷ was one of these boards.

Manteis, though the word means diviners, had in Theophrastus' day the narrower connotation of diviner by one of the sub-rites of sacrifice, that is to say from the signs to be observed in the entrails of the sacrificial victim, or from observation of the smoke, flame, or sparks, the bursting of the bladder of the animal, the falling of the barley groats or barley meal of the preliminary rite, or in later times the behaviour of the smoke of incense.⁸⁸

In literature and historical documents we meet the *mantis* as a public, usually a military, official. Telenikos the *mantis*, for instance, figures on the famous funeral stele of the Erechtheid tribe,⁸⁹ and Hierokles, a favourite butt of Aristophanes, probably received a state grant of land for his services.⁹⁰ But there are indications that even in the fifth century these diviners were looked upon askance by the educated. Apart from the scurrility with which their pretensions are lashed by Aristophanes, it is difficult not to feel a tinge of malice against the trade in Sophocles' unsympathetic handling of Teiresias in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*.

⁸⁷ Menander, *Frag.*, 202, Kock.

⁸⁸ On sub-rites of sacrifice see W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, pp. 184 *et seq.* To the examples there given may be added E. Westermarck, *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii., p. 152, (behaviour of victim); *ibid.*, p. 154, (speal bone); *ibid.*, p. 153, (sacrificial blood) from Morocco; W. Crooke, *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxv., pp. 76-77, (smoke of sacrifice) among the Hindoos. For libanomancy, for obvious reasons a late development, see Eitrem, *Opferitus und Voropfer*, p. 220. Divination by the speal bone among the mediaeval and modern Greeks has lately been the subject of an excellent monograph by Mega in *Λαογραφία*, viii. There is no evidence of its practice in antiquity before Psellus, and it may have come to Europe with the Tartars. It is known in the Far East and in Africa, (E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. i., p. 123), and may well have been invented independently in more than one centre.

⁸⁹ Hicks and Hill, *Greek Historical Inscriptions*, p. 38.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

The third class of diviners, who drew presages from the movements and cries of birds, practised a form of divination which was to come again into repute with the revival of all ancient superstitions under the aegis of Neo-Pythagoreanism in the early centuries of the Christian era.⁹¹ Among the Italic peoples augury was native and was always important. In Greece its antiquity is attested by the meaning of the word *οἰωνός*, which, primarily "a bird of prey," became generic for an omen.⁹² Nor is it peculiar to the classical peoples. An elaborate system, singularly analogous to the Roman, has been evolved in Borneo,⁹³ and nearer at hand, in the Middle East, it has been popular in ancient and mediaeval times. But in Greece, though it was the method *par excellence* of divination in the Heroic Age and so remained as late as Hesiod,⁹⁴ it appears in historical times to have been ousted from popularity, perhaps by the greater practical convenience of divination by the examination of entrails. But it never died out, and Bouché-Leclercq overstates the degree of its decline.⁹⁵ While not very much weight can be attached to "the observatory of Teiresias at Thebes,"⁹⁶ nor to the glosses of Hesychios on *Σκ(ε)ίρον* and Photius on *Σκίρον*, there is the interesting fragmentary boustrophedon inscription from Miletus (?) of about the VIth century,⁹⁷ which contains regulations for the interpretation of the flight of birds.

Naturally, our Superstitious Man believes in lucky and unlucky days. In modern European folklore the luck and ill-luck of days is in general determined by the associations

⁹¹ On whole subject, see W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, pp. 246 *et seq.*

⁹² See Aristophanes, *Birds*, 719.

⁹³ The similarities are discussed by Warde Fowler, *Roman Essays and Interpretations*, pp. 146-64.

⁹⁴ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 826-8.

⁹⁵ A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, vol. i., p. 142.

⁹⁶ Pausanias, ix., 16, 1. ⁹⁷ C. F. W. Dittenberger, *op cit.*, 3rd ed., 1167.

of the names of the seven-day week. These are mainly either planetary or astrological or religious,—e.g., the unluckiness of Friday upon which the Crucifixion took place. The Greeks of the fourth century, however, did not work with the seven-day week, and their lucky and unlucky days are therefore connected with days of the month. These tended to be associated with some particular deity, upon the grounds that the god or goddess in question was born upon that day of the month. Clearly there are in every case two possibilities :—(a), that the luckiness of the day was prior, and because of it the birth of a lucky god was then associated with it, or, (b), a lucky god was said to have been born upon a certain day, and hence that day became a lucky one. Both processes may have been operating in different cases : at any rate we have not the evidence upon which to lay down a general rule.

The lucky days, which our Superstitious Man observes, are the fourth and seventh of the month. Of the luckiness of these numbers there is evidence as old as Hesiod, and not only that, but the 14th, 24th, 17th, and 27th were also lucky in the Hesiodic calendar. For Hesiod here adopts⁹⁸ a triple division of the month, which is not at all uncommon among primitive peoples.⁹⁹ His month is of 30 days divided into three decades, a system perhaps connected with the Indo-European decimal system of numeration,¹⁰⁰ and the 4th and 7th of each decade are lucky. The 4th, like the 7th, is a holy day (770) ; it is a lucky day for marriage (800) and beginning shipbuilding (809). “On the fourth open your wine jar. Above all the middle fourth (14th) is a holy day. Few again know that the 24th of the month is very lucky at dawn, though less good at dusk. These days

⁹⁸ There are also traces in Hesiod of the alternative dual division into waxing and waning periods, which Nilsson believes to have been older in Greece than the triple, *Griechische Kalender*, p. 31.

⁹⁹ See N. M. P. Nilsson, *Primitive Time Reckoning*, pp. 167 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, *Griech. Kal.*, p. 30.

are a great boon to men on earth, but others are shift and fateless and bring nothing. But another praises a different day, for few have knowledge." (819) The polemical tone is probably due to the existence of another view, of which we have traces,¹⁰¹ that the 4th was not lucky but unlucky. But upon the whole Hesiod's view prevailed. Hesiod himself does not associate the 4th with Hermes, and it is possible that the birthday of the lucky god was subsequently fixed upon the 4th because this was already a lucky day. In the fifth century cakes were offered to Hermes every month upon the 4th,¹⁰² and the belief that the god was born upon this day is attested as early as the Homeric Hymn.¹⁰³

The birthday of Apollo is already fixed by Hesiod on the 7th, and it is certainly true that this number is very closely connected with the worship and ritual of the god. It is this fact which has led Nilsson to support the view that Apollo entered Greece from the East, bringing with him the division of the month into periods of seven days and a calendrical system which ultimately derives from Babylonia. This view raises great difficulties upon other grounds, and I do not personally agree with it. I am bound, however, to admit that the association of Apollo with the seventh is very early and constant, and that it is not unlikely that the luckiness of the seventh day derives from its prior association with the god. We may notice, however, that the sevenths of the other decades are also lucky in Hesiod, the 17th for threshing and cutting timber, whether for house or ship-building (805 f.), the 27th for broaching the wine-jar, harnessing oxen, mules, and horses, or launching ships (814 f.).

The 4th and 7th, then, are kept as holy days; our friend

¹⁰¹ Photius, s.v. τετράδι γηγόνος; Eustathius, 1353, 5; N. M. P. Nilsson, *Griech. Kal.*, p. 39.

¹⁰² Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 1128 and scholia.

¹⁰³ τετράδι τῇ προτέρῃ τῇ μιν τέκε πότνια Μαῖα, *Hom. Hym. Hermes*, 19.

procures the accessories of festal sacrifice,¹⁰⁴ and spends the day crowning the Hermaphrodites.

In Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman times statues of Hermaphrodites became exceedingly popular ornaments in houses, gymnasia,¹⁰⁵ and bathrooms.¹⁰⁶ This, however, is the first mention of Hermaphroditos in literature, though Alciphron, probably drawing from fourth century comedy, implies the existence of a public shrine of Hermaphroditos in the deme Alopeke.¹⁰⁷ The presence of these statues in his house attests our friend's *penchant* for alien oriental cults. The androgynous Aphrodite of Cyprus and Pamphylia had first been introduced into Athens in the fifth century under the title of Aphroditos.¹⁰⁸ Our passage has a bearing upon the controversy as to the origin of the form of the name Hermaphroditos, under which this bisexual deity became popular. Some have held that it derives in the first place, like Hermathena, merely from the practice of representing Aphroditos in the form of a herm. According to them the story which made the god the child of Hermes and Aphrodite is an aetiological invention of the Hellenistic Age subsequent to Theophrastus.¹⁰⁹ Others maintain that already in the time of Theophrastus Hermaphroditos was regarded as the offspring of Hermes and Aphrodite, and that the name has nothing to do with the herm form of statue.¹¹⁰ The fact that his statue is crowned upon Hermes' birthday (the 4th) supports this second view, and Proclus, comment-

¹⁰⁴ Myrtle wreaths and frankincense are the ordinary accompaniments of sacrifice at this date; cf. Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 861. Frankincense, of course, was originally a foreign importation into Greek ritual, see Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer*. For the use of wreaths at sacrifice, except in some "sad rites," see W. R. Halliday, *The Greek Questions of Plutarch*, p. 136. Smilax, for the use of which by Maenads see Euripides, *Bacchae*, 105, is a conjectural but probable emendation of the text.

¹⁰⁵ *Anth. Pal.*, ii. 102. ¹⁰⁶ *Anth. Pal.*, ix., 183; Martial, xiv., 174.

¹⁰⁷ Alciphron, *Epist.*, iii., 37.

¹⁰⁸ Macrobius, *Sat.*, iii., 8.

¹⁰⁹ Hermann in W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon*, vol. i., cols. 2314-42.

¹¹⁰ Jensen in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyklopedie*, vol. viii., pp. 714-21.

ing upon Hesiod, makes the 4th the birthday both of Aphrodite and Hermes: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς συνουσίαν ἐπιτηδεῖα.¹¹¹

Clearchus of Arcadia, whose piety according to Apollo outstripped the generous ostentation of the Magnesians offerings, observed the yearly public feasts but at the new moon crowned and polished his domestic Hermes and Hecate and offered frankincense and barley cakes.¹¹² Our friend is also much concerned with Hecate, but mainly in her aspect of the Queen of Magic.¹¹³ "He is apt, also, to purify his house frequently, alleging that Hecate has been brought into it by spells." Plato has told us in the *Republic* (364 C) of the magicians who for a fee will harm your enemies by influencing the gods with incantations (ἐπαγωγαῖς) and binding spells (καταδέσμοις) and in the *Laws* (IX, 933 D) provided for the punishment of witchcraft.¹¹⁴ To binding spells belong those leaden tablets known as *defixionum tabellae*, which were inscribed with a curse against an individual and then placed in a grave or nailed to the wall of a tomb. This practice possibly came from the East: it took firm root in Attica in the fourth century B.C., and subsequently spread to every part of the Roman Empire. For the incantation (ἐπαγωγή) we may quote a literary illustration of a much later date, which, if not quite

¹¹¹ Proclus *ad Hesiod, Works and Days*, 798. We cannot, of course, date the belief thus attested by Proclus. It was clearly contrary to Pythagorean doctrine, for the Pythagoreans placed the birth of Aphrodite upon the 6th. See Nilsson, *Griech. Kal.*, p. 39.

¹¹² τὸν δὲ Κλέαρχον φάναι ἐπιτελεῖν καὶ σπουδαίως θύειν ἐν τοῖς καθήκουσι χρόνοις, κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον ταῖς νομυηνίαις στεφανοῦντα καὶ φαίδρυνοντα τὸν Ἑρμῆν καὶ τὴν Ἑκάτην καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν ἱερῶν ἃ δὴ τοὺς προγόνους καταλιπεῖν καὶ τιμᾶν λιβανωτοῖς καὶ ψαιστοῖς καὶ ποπάνοις, Theopompus, *ap. Porphyry, de abst.*, ii., 16. Statues of Hecate were normally set up in houses as a prophylactic measure. The Queen of Magic kept magic out.

¹¹³ For the influence of this aspect upon medieval demonology, see W. R. Halliday, *Greek and Roman Folklore*, p. 137.

¹¹⁴ Cf. γόης τῶν μαγείας καὶ ἑπωδᾶς θεσπεσίους ὑπισχυομένων καὶ θησαυρῶν ἀναπομπὰς καὶ κλήρων διαδοχάς, Lucian, *Alex.*, 5, 212.

as comprehensive as the curse of Dr. Slop or that passed upon the Jackdaw of Rheims, is not wholly inadequate. Aemilianus had accused Apuleius of possessing a magical ring engraved with a skeleton. This the accused denies. The design upon his ring is a beautiful representation of Mercury. “ But in return for that lie, Aemilianus, may that same god who goes between the lords of Heaven and the lords of Hell grant you the hatred of the gods of either world and ever send to meet you the shadows of the dead with all the ghosts, with all the fiends, with all the spectres, with all the goblins of all the world, and thrust upon your eyes all the terror that walketh by night, all the dread dwellers in the tomb, all the horrors of the sepulchre.” ¹¹⁵

The magicians upon whose incantations Apuleius has modelled his curse would cast you love spells, bring up spirits, summon decaying corpses, bring Hecate as large as life before you and draw down the moon,¹¹⁶ and by their magic they could bring households into sinister association with the Queen of Black Magic.¹¹⁷ The result of this might be the “ possession ” of the inmates. For insanity, perhaps because of her lunar associations, was often regarded as due to possession by Hecate,¹¹⁸ and conversely the mysteries of Hecate in Aegina were a resort for curing the insane.¹¹⁹ The author of the treatise *On the Sacred Disease* describes how the magicians decide from the symptoms what particular deity is the agent of the patient's possession. Nightmare and delirium attest possession by Hecate and the heroes.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Apuleius, *Apologia*, 64, trans. H. E. Butler.

¹¹⁶ Of the Hyperborean of Kleodemos τὰ μὲν γὰρ σμικρὰ ταῦτα τί χρὴ καὶ λέγειν ὅσα ἐπεδείκνυτο ἔρωτας ἐπιπέμπων καὶ δαίμονας ἀνάγων καὶ νεκροὺς ἐώλους ἀνακαλῶν καὶ τὴν Ἑκατὴν αὐτὴν ἐναργῆ παριστὰς καὶ τὴν Σελλήνην κατασπῶν; Lucian, *Philopseudes*, 13, 41.

¹¹⁷ Hesychius, s.v. ὠπωτήρε· διὰ φαρμάκων εἰωθασί τινες ἐπάγειν τῇ Ἑκάτῃ τὰς οἰκίας.

¹¹⁸ References are collected in J. Tambornino, *de antiquorum daemonismo*, p. 65.

¹¹⁹ J. Tambornino, *op. cit.*, p. 75. ¹²⁰ Hippocrates, *de sacr. morb.*, iv., 30.

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The epileptic is a man possessed, and, if brought into contact with him, the demon may catch us too. If our hero sees a maniac or an epileptic man, he will shudder and spit into his bosom. "We guard ourselves against epilepsy," says Pliny "by spitting,—that is to say, we hurl back the plague. In like manner we repel the evil eye and the lame man who jostles on the right hand side. We also ask pardon from the gods for any overbold hope by spitting in the bosom." ¹²¹

The particular haunt of Hecate and her attendant band of ghosts, the most dreaded variety of which were those who had untimely lost their lives by violence, was cross-roads, at which our own suicides were buried. Here there stood cairns of stones, and these the Superstitious Man is scrupulous to anoint with oil from his flask as he goes by and to fall on his knees and worship them before he departs. It was the regular mode of sacrifice to baetyls or aniconic sacred stones to wreath them with fillets and to anoint them with oil or with the fat of sacrifice.¹²² The oil, of course, our friend has handy, for the use of the phrase *ληκυθίον ἀπώλεσεν* in ridiculing the prologues of Euripides in the *Frogs* will remind us how constantly the average Greek carried an oil flask or had one carried with him by his attendant slave.¹²³ The conduct of the Superstitious Man resembles that of Rutilianus, the noble dupe of the charlatan Alexander in the second century after Christ, when the number of such sacred stones in an age devoted to super-

¹²¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxviii., 4, (7), 35. For spitting against epilepsy see Apuleius, *Apologia*, 44, and references in Abt, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-1; against evil eye, Theocritus, xx., 11; Persius, ii., 30-34; to avoid nemesis, Theocritus, vi., 39; Lucian, *Nav.*, 15; spitting on for luck, Theocritus, vii., 126.

¹²² See W. R. Halliday, *Greek Questions of Plutarch*, p. 77.

¹²³ *αὐτολήκυθος* assumed as a comic title, like *Ithyphallos*, etc., by the young Mohawks of Fourth Century Athens, meant apparently a man so poor that he had no slave to carry his oil flask, but had to carry it himself. Bekker, *Anec. Graec.*, 204, 27; notes to Aristophanes, *Frag.*, 16, Kock, ii., p. 16.

stition seems to have increased until they must have studded the country-side.¹²⁴ It is made a charge against Apuleius' accuser that he is notoriously a despiser of the gods:—"his farm holds no shrine, no holy place, nor grove. But why do I speak of groves or shrines? Those who have been on his property say they never saw there one stone where offering of oil has been made, one bough where wreaths have been hung."¹²⁵

The act of adoration (προσκύνησις) which was due to shrines and sacred images etc. consisted in extending the hand palm outward towards the object of adoration and kissing it.¹²⁶

To the cross-roads every month the richer houses sent the offering of a meal which was known as "Hecate's supper."¹²⁷ The offering was made either during the "unlucky" last three days of the month or at the new moon. The fare was probably simple. Perhaps lupines and eggs formed a part of it,¹²⁸ and a kind of round cake with a candle in the middle.¹²⁹ From the passage before us it is clear that

¹²⁴ 'Ρουτιλιανὸς ἀνὴρ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἐν πολλαῖς τάξεσι Ῥωμαϊκαῖς ἐξητασμένος, τὰ δὲ περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς πάνυ νοσῶν, καὶ ἀλλόκοτα περὶ αὐτῶν πεπιστευκῶς καὶ εἰ μόνον ἀηλιμμένον που λίθον ἢ ἐστεφανωμένον θεάσαιο προσπίπτων εὐθὺς καὶ προσκυνῶν καὶ ἐπὶ πολὺ παρεστῶς καὶ εὐχόμενος καὶ τάχαθὰ παρ' αὐτοῦ αἰτῶν, Lucian, *Alex.*, 30, 238. Compare Lucian, *deor. conc.*, 12, 534.

¹²⁵ Apuleius, *Apologia*, 56; further references from Patristic literature in Butler and Owen, *Apulei Apologia*, p. 120.

¹²⁶ Sophocles, *Electra*, 1374; *Philoc.*, 1408; *Ced. Col.*, 1654; Aristophanes, *Knights*, 156. The action was also used to confirm a lucky omen, e.g. Aristophanes, *Knights*, 640.

¹²⁷ For "Hecate's suppers" see Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 396, 594, and Scholia, Athenaeus, vii., 325 A; Demosthenes, *Konon*, 39; Plutarch, *Quaest. Conviv.*, vii., 6, 709 A; Harpocration, s.v. δξυθύμια; *Et. Mag.*, 626, 44; Schol. Aeschylus, *Choephora*, 98, 99.

¹²⁸ Thus Diogenes recommends Menippus to put into his wallet some lupines or some Hecate's supper or a kathartic egg or something of the sort, Lucian, *Dial. Mort.*, i., 1, 331; cf. *ibid.*, xxii., 3, 425.

¹²⁹ The cake was called Amphiphon and is described by Athenaeus, xiv., 53, 645 A.

garlic also might be included. For if our friend sees anyone feasting on the garlic at the cross-roads, he will go away, pour water over his hand, and, summoning the holy women, bid them carry a squill or puppy round him for purification.

The meals offered to Hecate were taboo to members of the household which made the offering.¹³⁰ Sacrifices to the nether powers, as opposed to those offered to the heavenly deities, were not partaken of by the worshippers. Usually they were burned whole in the fire. But in the case of these meals the very poor were used to pick them up and eat them, and no doubt the purpose of the rite, though less explicit, was very like that of the Sin Eater, who in many parts of this country used to be employed at funerals to eat the sins of the dead man. The poor man's meal transferred the ills of the household from which the Hecate's supper emanated, to the eater.

Garlic was, of course, a normal constituent of the poor man's diet. There are some instances of its ritual impurity. The charlatans attacked in the treatise *On the Sacred Disease* recommend their patients to abstain from garlic.¹³¹

The regulations of the temple of Men Turannos at Sunium in the second century B.C. enjoin purification before entering the temple for those who have eaten garlic.¹³² Stilpon was said to have eaten garlic and to have gone to sleep in the temple of the Mother of the Gods, into which the entry of garlic eaters was taboo. In a dream the goddess rebuked the philosopher, who retorted upon her, "Give me something better to eat, and I will not eat garlic."¹³³

Perhaps it is not an accident that both these last examples are connected with imported Asiatic cults, and the doctrine

¹³⁰ Plutarch, *Quaest. Conviv.*, 708 F.

¹³¹ Hippocrates, *de sacr. morb.*, loc. cit. Garlic was taboo to women at Skirophonor, Photius s.v. *Τροπήλις*, probably because it was thought to stimulate sexual appetite.

¹³² C. F. W. Dittenberger, *op. cit.*, 3rd ed., 1042.

¹³³ Athenaeus, x., 19, 422 D.

of the religious impurity of garlic may belong to the foreign forms of worship to which our Superstitious Man is addicted. The holy women summoned by him are the old women called *περιμάκτραι*,¹³⁴ or *ἀπομάκτραι*.¹³⁵ Their procedure is to make a magic circle round him.¹³⁶

The instruments employed are a squill or a puppy. The latter is mentioned also by Plutarch,¹³⁷ and the rite is given the technical name of *periskylakismos*. Analogous to this private application of carrying the puppy round an individual patient is the public purification of the Macedonian and Boeotian armies by marching them between the severed portions of a dog. The use of squills as kathartic agents is old and well attested in Greece.¹³⁸ With squills the *pharmakoi* were beaten at the *Thargelia*.

That our friend is a member of an Orphic congregation will not surprise us. Such bodies, we have already noticed, were religious associations practising mystic rites and adopting a rule of life with a view to securing the happiness of its initiated members beyond the grave. Bliss,—an eternal drinking bout, according to Plato,—would be then the lot of the initiated, while the uninitiated wallowed for

¹³⁴ Plutarch, *de sup.*, 1680.

¹³⁵ Pollux, vii., 138.

¹³⁶ Compare Menander, *Frag.* 530, (Kock), “let the women run right round to disenchant thee.” The whole question of the magic circle in Greek ritual is examined in the first section of Eitrem, *Opfer-ritus und Voropfer*. For the magic circle in general see the references collected by Mr. Penzer in Penzer-Tawney, *The Ocean of Story*, (see General Index, s.v. *Circle*).

¹³⁷ Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, 68.

¹³⁸ Hence in the comic preparations for Menippus’ visit to Hades he is purified at midnight on the banks of the Tigris with torches and squills, Lucian, *Men.*, 7, 466. Compare Diphilus, *Frag.*, 126 (Kock),

δαδι μὲν σκίλλῃ τε μὲν, τόσα σώματα φωτῶν,
θείω τ’ ἀσφάλτῳ τε πολυφλοίσβῳ τε θαλάσση
ἐξ ἀκαρπεῖταιο βαθυρροῦ Ὠκεανοῦ.

Squills planted in front of a house protected it from magic, Theophrastus, *Hist. Plant.*, viii., 13, 4; Pliny, *N.H.*, xxi., 17, (68), 108. Further examples and references will be found in the appendix to Rohde, *Psyche*, ii.

ever in bottomless slime. Though Orphic mysticism had influenced Plato himself and other Greek religious philosophers, the practice of these mystic sects and the hangers-on who battered upon the credulity of their members had earned them the contempt of the educated.¹³⁹ They formed naturally the *point d'appui* for the oriental mystery religions which were now invading the Greek world.

The society holds monthly services, and in this it agrees with the normal practice of Greek cults in which regular monthly sacrifices (*ἐπιμήνια*) to the deity concerned are usual.¹⁴⁰ His wife or (if she is too busy) his children and their nurse accompany our *dévol*. Women were admitted both at Eleusis and in the mysteries of the great gods of Samothrace which achieved such popularity in the Hellenistic age. The sex, ungallantly, but perhaps with reason, have been described by Strabo as being by common consent the leading spirits in superstition and the chief agents in driving men to religious observance.¹⁴¹

At least there is little doubt in fact that the emotional and individualistic mystery cults appealed to feminine religiosity and the complaints of the consequent corruption of feminine morals are evidence of the important part which women played in establishing the popularity of this type of worship.¹⁴² I do not know of other evidence for the initiation of children into a religious association which belongs to so early a date. In imperial times it was frequent in all the mystery cults and a number of examples are recorded in inscriptions.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 364 D.

¹⁴⁰ The general rule in Greek cult is monthly services in the worship of gods, annual services in the worship of heroes.

¹⁴¹ Strabo, vii., 3, 4, 297.

¹⁴² Aristophanes, *Birds*, 876 and scholia; Phintys *ap.* Stobaeus, *Flor.* (Meineke), iii., p. 63; Law of Eresos, *Classical Review*, vol. xvi., p. 290; Plutarch, *Amatorius*, 13.

¹⁴³ See references in W. R. Halliday, *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity*, p. 302, note 1.

Time has run out, and we may not venture to stray beyond the items in Theophrastos' text. We may be sure for instance that the Superstitious Man was not unprovided with a magic ring such as a drachma would buy, to cure indigestion.¹⁴⁴ The yet more wonderful masterpiece of Eudemus, which the Good Man in the *Plutus* wears on his finger as an infallible protection against the tooth of calumny,¹⁴⁵ no doubt was never really on the market. But, when all is said, we may remind ourselves that anti-rheumatic rings, magical and galvanic belts are still cheaply bought and sold, and we may leave it to those who have never sat finger to finger round a table in the dark, nor have thrown spilled salt over their left shoulder with their right hand, nor “ touched wood,” nor avoided walking under a ladder, nor eschewed the number thirteen, to point, if they will, the arrogant finger of too contemptuous scorn at the poor fellow whose foibles have provided the topics of our discussion.

W. R. HALLIDAY.

¹⁴⁴ Antiphanes, *Frag.* 177 (Kock), *ap.* Athenaeus, 123 b.

¹⁴⁵ Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 884. For the rings which conferred immunity from snake-bite see Scholia *ad loc.* quoting Eupolis, *Frag.* 87 and Ameipsias, *Frag.* 27.